



# ***BLIGHTED PROPERTY REVIEW COMMITTEE***

**THURSDAY, January 22, 2009  
CITY COUNCIL OFFICE  
6:00 p.m.  
AGENDA**

- I. Call to Order 6:00p.m.**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Approval of the Agenda & January 2009 Minutes**
- IV. Introduction of Dan Wright, CD Housing Specialist**
- V. Properties of Merit Presentation**
- VI. Updates:**
- Update map to include OCR, ADD, Community Gardens, etc – W. Bealer
  - Grants – L. Olsen & L. Kelleher
  - Update on 22 target properties – W. Bealer & J. Khokhar
  - Addition of Hansen pop-up identifying properties in the Blighted Property process – M. Mayfield
  - Creation of sub-committees – L. Olsen & L. Kelleher
  - Matrix sheets for properties in the process – L. Kelleher

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## **Blighted Property Review Committee**

**Thursday, January 22, 2009**

### **Meeting Report**

**Committee Members Attending:** L. Olsen, M. Candelario, M. Wolfe, W. Bealer

**Others Attending:** M. Mayfield, J. Khokhar, L. Kelleher

Mr. Olsen called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. He announced that a quorum was present.

#### **Public Comment**

No one offered public comment.

#### **Agenda and Minutes**

Mr. Olsen asked the Committee to review the agenda for this meeting and the minutes from the December meeting.

Mr. Candelario moved, seconded by Ms. Wolfe, to approve the agenda for this meeting and the minutes from the December meeting.

#### **Introduction of CD Director**

Ms. Kelleher explained that Mr. Mayes was unable to attend due to a death in the family. She stated that she has been speaking with Dan Wright who works in CD as the Housing Specialist about the efforts and mission of the BPRC and he is supportive. She stated that she sent Mr. Mayes an e-mail requesting that Mr. Mayes have Mr. Wright attend the BPRC meeting when he cannot.

#### **Properties of Merit**

The presentation will occur at the February meeting.

#### **Report - Allentown Codes Shadow and Forum**

Ms. Mayfield stated that she and Codes representatives spent a half day in Allentown learning about the Allentown Codes operation. She stated that staff came away with information that can assist Reading. She added that several forms were obtained that are being formatted for use here. She stated that Reading will be adopting the Allentown ticketing system for quality of life issues, eliminating the notice prior to citation.

Ms. Mayfield reported that when they discussed developing a Codes forum with sister cities, she learned that a Codes forum already exists and Reading has now been invited into the existing forum, who is meeting next week.

### **Updates**

#### **Inclusion of ADD, OCR, Garden Properties, etc.**

Mr. Bealer stated that this issue is on hold until after the blighted notices are issued.

### **Grants**

Ms. Kelleher stated that she recently learned that the City is applying for \$5,000,000 in Neighborhood Stabilization Program funding. She reminded everyone of the brief prepared about this program by the Legislative Aide Committee. She explained that the City is targeting a large area, from Marion to Franklin Street and 6th St to Schuylkill Avenue. Their first focus area will be in the area abutting the Sun Fresh Food industrial area. The City, County and Our City Reading have been purchasing and demolishing properties in this area for over 10 years and this funding will help move the plan forward. She explained that a gated town-home community is planned. Ms. Wolfe questioned the rationale behind the gated community noting that this leaves one with the impression that this area must be separated from the surrounding neighborhoods. Ms. Kelleher agreed with Ms. Wolfe's opinion.

Ms. Kelleher also stated that she conversed with the DCED Southeast District Office Director Ron Bednar, who said that there are 3-5 grant programs that could assist the BPRC. He stated that the DCED has specialists that work in this areas and that he would have them contact the Council Office.

Ms. Kelleher and Mr. Khokhar also noted that when the Vacant Property Registration legislation is approved those fines/fees will also be forwarded to aid the BPRC effort

[Fees shall be dedicated to a line item in the budget for the Property Maintenance Division's enforcement and administration of the Vacant Property Registration requirements]. Ms. Kelleher explained that the fees are scaled; increasing with each year a property remains vacant. She stated that the legislation was recently reviewed by the Legislative Aide Committee, who made some suggestions that tighten the legislation. The largest change removed the ability of a property owner to use electronic and flyer advertisement to obtain a waiver.

Mr. Khokhar stated that in other states vacant properties are charged higher property tax rates.

Ms. Kelleher stated that Codes has adopted a tougher "no nonsense" approach. The BPRC expressed their support.

### **Target List Properties**

Mr. Khokhar distributed copies of letters drafted and sent to 628 and 644 North Front Street, properties that were added at the December meeting. Updates on the existing properties were not presented. It was noted that 620 North Front was excluded due to the potential for litigation.

When discussing the Blighted Property process, Mr. Olsen suggested using a matrix to track the process each target property takes. It was noted that the Codes enforcement process will mirror the Blighted Property process. Mr. Khokhar questioned if this matrix would be redundant. Ms. Kelleher noted that the matrix could contain pertinent information and highlight the course each property takes.

Mr. Olsen requested that Ms. Kelleher prepare the matrix in the form of a spreadsheet.

Mr. Khokhar stated that 22 properties are on the Blighted Property list.

Ms. Mayfield noted the need for a popup notice to be added in City's Hansen database so staff can easily identify properties that are in the process.

### **Other Business**

Ms. Kelleher announced that she and Mr. Olsen were invited to speak about the BPRC at the Industrial and Commercial Development Committee meeting, a part of the

Reading Berks Association of Realtors.

Mr. Olsen noted his agreement to facilitate the Reading Beautification (RBI) planning session last Saturday at the Goggleworks. The RBI is a not for profit organization that was formed in the mid 70's. He said that the group discussed the past and future of the organization. He stated that the RBI group discussed broadening their scope to include surrounding communities but decided that as the issues in Reading are unfinished, it is not time to take on the issues in other areas. He stated that the RBI budget year ends June 30th of each year.

Mr. Olsen noted meeting Al Huff at the planning session. Mr. Huff explained his work to identify rental properties and assess neighborhoods. He stated that he was amazed at the work Mr. Huff and his colleagues have performed. He noted the wealth of information collected by this group. He noted Mr. Huff's involvement with RiverPlace.

Ms. Wolfe suggested honoring the work of Mr. Huff's group. Mr. Olsen offered to discuss this further with Mr. Behling and the RiverPlace board.

Ms. Kelleher stated that Mr. Huff sent his property information to the Council Office electronically. She stated that when first receiving the information, she did a sampling and found 5 new illegal rentals in the 200 block of Linden Street. She explained that the Council Office has identified over 5,000 illegal rentals that are not currently in the Codes database and the staff intern is currently working to re-sort the information and compare it against the data collected by the office to find new properties.

Mr. Olsen stated that the Office of Neighborhood Development's (OND) mission was also discussed at the meeting. Mr. Khokhar stated that the Focus of OND seemed to improve sections of the city.

Mr. Bealer noted the need to identify good properties in blocks where out of town property owners are chipping away at the quality of life of the neighborhood. He suggested keeping these areas in mind when the BPRC selects its next neighborhood and area.

Mr. Bealer noted the good attendance and the Reading Police participation at the Community Hope meeting. The group expressed their hope that additional off-street

parking can be provided when problem properties are demolished. Ms. Kelleher explained that Mr. Pick, County Community Development Director, can assist by using the ADD (Acquisition, Demolition, and Disposition) program to assist in this effort. She explained the ADD program.

Mr. Bealer stated that the BPRC will need to begin appraisals of the target properties who do not comply near the end of 2009. Ms. Kelleher stated that CD staff will begin working to find uncommitted CDBG funds in early February. She promised to have a conversation with Mr. Hottenstein about redirecting some of these funds to cover these costs.

Mr. Olsen noted his discussions with Ms. Kelleher about the creation of subcommittees to assist the efforts of the BPRC. Ms. Kelleher and Mr. Olsen recommend establishing four committees: Codes, Funding, Education and Legislative or Research. The topic will be further discussed at the February meeting.

Mr. Bealer stated that he has asked Dr. Chapman, Superintendent of the Reading School District, to meet with the Director of Properties of Merit (POM). Ms. Kelleher stated that perhaps POM could organize a project with the students, noting the need for schools receiving 21st Century funding to undertake community projects.

Ms. Wolfe moved, seconded by Mr. Candelario, to adjourn the meeting.

*Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk*

### **Follow-up Issues:**

- Update map to include OCR, ADD, Community Gardens, etc – W. Bealer
- Grants – L. Olsen & L. Kelleher
- Update on 22 target properties – W. Bealer & J. Khokhar
- Addition of Hansen pop-up identifying properties in the Blighted Property process – M. Mayfield
- Creation of sub-committees – L. Olsen & L. Kelleher
- Matrix sheets for properties in the process – L. Kelleher
- Properties of Merit Presentation (February Meeting)

# **Blighted Properties Review Committee Checklist**

## **Properties List (2009)**

### **Target Area**

- 317 Schuylkill Ave
- 118 W Elm St
- 120 W Elm St
- 343 McKnight St
- 360 McKnight St
- 157 N Front St
- 200 N Front St
- 210 N Front St
- 328 Pear St
- 217 N 2<sup>nd</sup> St
- 228 N 2<sup>nd</sup> St
- 363 N 2<sup>nd</sup> St
- 127 Walnut St
- 129 Walnut St
- 153 Walnut St
- 155 Walnut St

### **Target Neighborhood**

- 628 N Front St
- 644 N Front St

### **Target Properties**

- 431 – 437 Penn St
- 530 – 532 Penn St

## Process Checklist

- Create List (BPRC)
- Inspection Letters (Codes)
- Inspections (Codes)
- Inspection Reports (Codes)
- Review Inspection Reports (BPRC)
- Create and Sign Blight Notice Letters (BPRC)
- Send Blight Notice Letters (City Clerk/Redevelopment Authority)
- Re-inspections (Codes)
- Re-inspection Reports (Codes)
- Review Re-inspections Reports (BPRC)
- Blight Determination Hearing (BPRC & Codes)
- Update Property List (BPRC)
- Send Updated Property List to Planning Commission, Redevelopment Authority and City Council [Information purposes only] (BPRC)
- Create and Sign Blight Determination Letters (BPRC)
- Send Blight Determination Letters (City Clerk/Redevelopment Authority)
- Re-inspections (Codes)
- Re-inspection Reports (Codes)



Property  
Address: 625 Cedar

Date Declared Blighted by BPRC: Tues, June 3, 2008

	Code Enforcement	BPRC	Planning Commission	Redevelopment Auth.	City Council	Rehab Partner
<b>Month 1</b> Action Required Date Completed	Inspection					
<b>Month 2</b> Action Required Date Completed	Inspection	Blight Notices  <i>90 days for rehab</i>		Mail Blight Notices		
<b>Month 3</b> Action Required Date Completed						
<b>Month 4</b> Action Required Date Completed	Re-inspection					
<b>Month 5</b> Action Required Date Completed	Re-inspection	Determination Hearing	Review Determination	Review Determination	Review Property List	
<b>Month 6</b> Action Required Date Completed		Create Determination Letter  <i>60 days to complete rehab</i>		Mail Determination Letter		

<div>Month 7</div> <div>Action Required</div> <div>Date Completed</div>	Re-inspection	Blight Certification Hearing	Reaffirm Certifications	Certified Props to Council	Reaffirm Certification	
<div>Month 8</div> <div>Action Required</div> <div>Date Completed</div>						
<div>Month 9</div> <div>Action Required</div> <div>Date Completed</div>						
<div>Month 10</div> <div>Action Required</div> <div>Date Completed</div>	Present to BPRC			Submit offer to owners Move just compensation escrow		
<div>Month 11</div> <div>Action Required</div> <div>Date Completed</div>	Inspection			30 days for prelim objections		
<div>Month 12</div> <div>Action Required</div> <div>Date Completed</div>	Inspection			File Declaration of Taking		

